

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended): A dehydrated shelf stable vegetable product which comprises a compressed vegetable piece having a moisture content of about 12% or less, having and a substantially intact cellular structure, ~~prepared by partially dehydrating vegetable pieces to a moisture content from about 8% to about 30%, compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension, and where the moisture content of the partially dehydrated vegetable piece is not 12% or less, thereafter further dehydrating the compressed vegetable piece to a moisture content of about 12% or lower,~~ wherein the vegetable piece when placed in water at a temperature of 90°C to 100°C without further application of heat is capable of rehydration substantially to its original fresh dimension and is of edible tenderness and texture instantly or within five minutes.

2. (Previously Presented): A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable is selected from the group consisting of carrots, peas, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, onion, squash, chillies, zucchini, mushroom, cabbage, celery, green beans, beetroot and pumpkin.

3. (Original): A vegetable product according to claim 1 or 2 which includes one or more added solutes.

4. (Previously Presented): A vegetable product according to claim 3 wherein said solutes are selected from the group consisting of sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, sodium citrate, glucose, sucrose, fructose and sorbitol.

5. (Original): A vegetable product according to claim 1 having a moisture content from about 2% to about 12%.

6. (Original): A vegetable product according to claim 5 having a moisture content from 4% to 6%.

7. (Currently Amended): A ~~method~~ vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content which is from about 8% to about 20%.

8. (Original): A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the compressed vegetable piece is further dehydrated to a moisture content from about 2% to about 10%.

9. (Currently Amended): A process for the preparation of a dehydrated, rapidly rehydrating, vegetable product which comprises partially dehydrating vegetable pieces to a moisture content from about 8% to about 30%, compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension, and ~~where the moisture content of the partially dehydrated vegetable piece is not 12% or less,~~ thereafter further dehydrating the compressed vegetable piece to a moisture content of about 12% or lower, wherein the vegetable piece when placed in water at a temperature of 90°C to 100°C without further application of heat is capable of rehydration substantially to its original fresh dimension and is of edible tenderness and texture instantly or within five minutes.

10. (Previously Presented): A process according to claim 9 wherein the vegetable is selected from the group consisting of carrots, peas, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, onion, squash, chillies, zucchini, mushroom, cabbage, celery, green beans, beetroot and pumpkin.

11. (Original): A process according to claim 9 wherein prior to compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension one or more solutes are added to the piece.

12. (Previously Presented): A process according to claim 11 wherein said solutes are selected from the group consisting of sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, sodium citrate, glucose, sucrose, fructose and sorbitol .

13. (Original): A process according to claim 9 wherein the compressed vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content from about 2% to about 12%.

14. (Original): A process according to claim 13 wherein the vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content from 4% to 6%.

15. (New): A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable piece is compressed in a roller mill at a roller gap of 0.2 to 2.5 mm.

16. (New): A process according to claim 9 wherein said vegetable piece is compressed in a roller mill at a roller gap of 0.2 to 2.5 mm.

17. (New): A vegetable product according to claim 3 wherein said vegetable piece contains said added solutes in an amount from 0.3% to 10% w/w.

18. (New): A process according to claim 11 wherein said added solutes are present in an amount from 0.3% to 10% w/w.